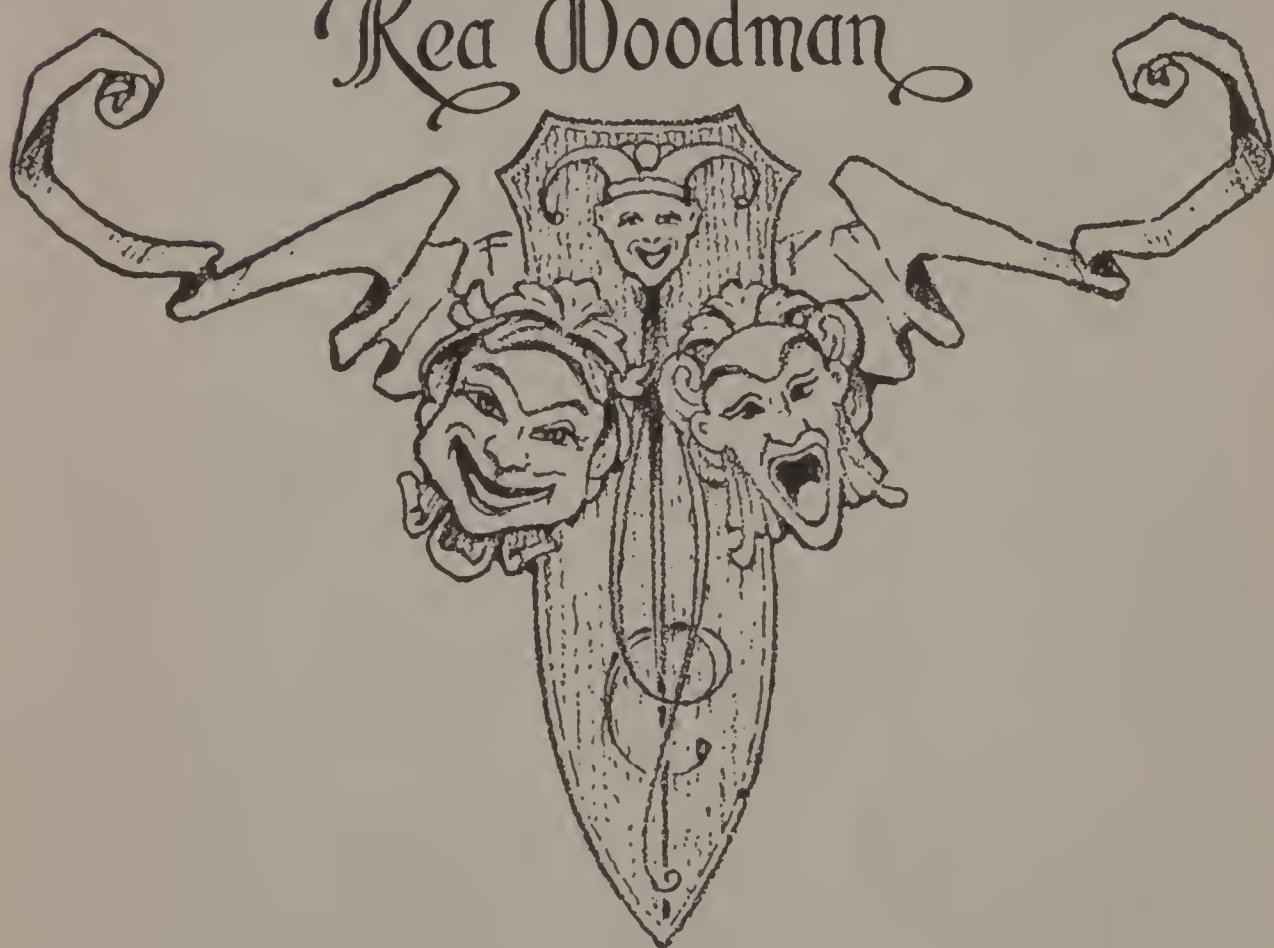


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The King of Nolande

Rea Woodman



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Poughkeepsie, New York

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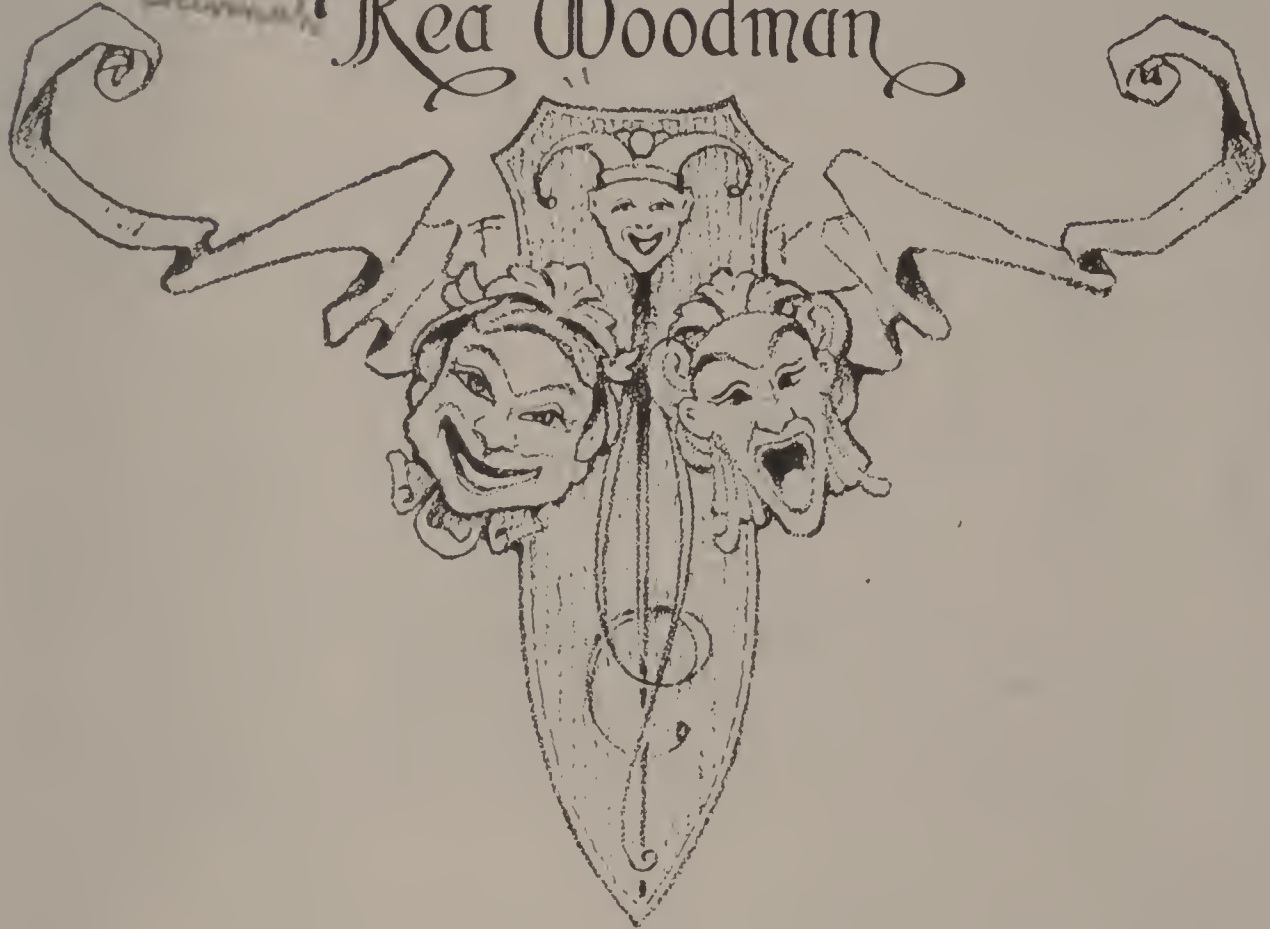
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(Continued on inside back cover.)

The King of Nolande

Hannah Rea Woodman



The Woodman Plays Co.
Poughkeepsie, New York

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no 1

When this little play was written, in the early summer of 1914, my Mother was with me, and daily life in "The Little Dutch" was attractive in itself and for itself. "She has gone to that fair, bright Heaven, Oh so far away from here," but I like to associate *The King of Noland* with her name, her presence, her faith. To The Beautiful, then, with admiration and gratitude and longing, these nonsense pages she enjoyed and believed in.

AN ANNOUNCEMENT

After January 1, 1924, seven of the Woodman Plays for schools, high schools and colleges, namely, "*The Sweet Girl Graduates*," "*The Professor*," "*His Uncle John*," "*Galliger*," "*Bess Goes to Europe*," "*The Rescue of Prince Hal*" and "*The Cinder Maid*," for ten years published by The Eldridge Entertainment House, of Franklin, Ohio, will be published by THE WOODMAN PLAYS COMPANY, of Poughkeepsie, New York.

After September 15, 1924, the remaining six of The Woodman Plays, namely, "*The Clever Doctor*," "*The Master's Birthday: a Dickens Party*," "*Preserving a Smith*," "*The Honest Shoemaker*," "*Billy Ben's Pirate Play*" and "*The Oaten Cakes*," now published by The Eldridge Entertainment House, will be taken over by THE WOODMAN PLAYS COMPANY.

THE PEOPLE OF THE DRAMA

NOSCO III, THE KING OF NOLANDE

THE DUKE OF NAUGHT, BROTHER TO THE KING

THE LORD HIGH CHANCELLOR

THE LORD HIGH EXECUTIONER

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

THE COURT MINSTREL

ROCOCO, KING OF THE FEEJEE ISLANDS

MATILDA, QUEEN CONSORT

AGRIA, AN EXILED QUEEN

THE HEIR APPARENT

MARKHAM, PERSONAL SERVANT TO THE KING

Courtiers, Ladies in Waiting, Servants, Pages and
Bellboys

ACT I THE THRONE ROOM, *One Morning in June*

“No matter what I’m doing, I’ve got to stop and put on my crown, and reign awhile. I wish I were a pirate or a banker!”

ACT II THE THRONE ROOM, *Several Days Later*

“If I can’t run this country without war, I’ll resign.”

ACT III THE THRONE ROOM, *Two Weeks Later*

“One King’s as good as another. It all comes in a lifetime!”

EPILOGUE THE PRIVATE OFFICE OF MR. FERDINAND NOSCO, *Five Years Later*

“Oh yes, I’ve corralled a few millions. It isn’t hard — if you know the corners!”

(This page is suggested for use on printed programs, in connection, of course, with *The People of the Drama*.)

ACT I

THE THRONE ROOM, ONE MORNING IN JUNE

(*The Throne Room, a well-furnished apartment, in which the chief and commanding ornament is The Throne [a handsome hall settee would serve admirably], reached by three wide, crimson steps. A pair of portieres cover a door at one side, by which stands Markham, erect, uniformed, grave, motionless. On the steps of The Throne lay many books, open, face downward. King Nosco, in shooting jacket and knickerbockers, is whistling "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight!" and sorting fishin' tackle, in a fine state of confusion, from a large wooden box on the floor beside him.*)

(*Enter a Servant, and speaks to Markham.*)

Markham The Lord High Chancellor. (*He opens the portieres.*)

(*Enter the Lord High Chancellor, a stately old party, in official dress.*)

Chancellor (*bowing*) Your Majesty! (*The Servant bows, and withdraws.*)

Nosco (*cheerfully*) Good morning, Chancellor!

Chancellor (*bowing*) I trust I see your Majesty in good health this morning?

Nosco Never better, Chancellor, never better. How are you?

Chancellor I thank your Majesty, I am in excellent health. Have you any commands for today, your Majesty?

Nosco (*digging into the box*) I think not. Everything's all right, isn't it?

Chancellor (*referring to the scroll he carries*) So far as I know, your Majesty, everything is quiet in the confines of the kingdom. The revolt has been quelled.

Nosco What revolt?

Chancellor There was a revolt yesterday in the North-east Province.

Nosco (*cheerfully*) You don't tell me? What was the matter?

Chancellor Your Majesty, it pains me to report that the people object to the new state road that is being cut through. They say it is destroying too much property.

Nosco I agree with them. I said so myself. I said it before they did. But Parliament would have that road seventy feet wide. It is ridiculous. Any practical farmer knows that. How many people rebelled?

Chancellor (*stiffly*) It was a revolution, your Majesty.

Nosco (*winding fish line*) So you said. How many people rebelled?

Chancellor Twenty-six, your Majesty.

Nosco (*grinning*) What did you do?

Chancellor We sent up the Royal Reserves, and swore in a hundred special deputies to keep the peace.

Nosco (*shrugging*) Four deputies to each rebel! Big business! Bring me the names of the twenty-six citizens who object to that road. Bring 'em as soon as possible. That's all this morning.

Chancellor Pardon me, your Majesty. It is customary, under the circumstances, for the King to issue a Proclamation.

Nosco (*not having heard, being bent over the box*) A what?

Chancellor A Proclamation, your Majesty.

Nosco Of course. When a King has anything to say he ups and says it, like any other man. I am not ready to say anything yet. That's all this morning.

Chancellor Yes, your Majesty. (*Reluctantly, he bows himself out. Nosco winds line, whistling softly and absently. A Servant comes in, and speaks to Markham.*)

Markham Your Majesty, a committee from Parliament desires to have an audience.

Nosco (*looking up archly*) Have a which?

Markham (*with the ghost of a grin*) Have an audience, your Majesty.

Nosco You mean they want to ask my advice about something they have decided to do anyway. I'm not reigning now. Tell 'em so.

Markham (demurely) Yes, your Majesty. (*He goes out.*)

Nosco (sorting fishin' tackle and whistling happily) I suppose they want to talk about that road. I'll settle that matter when I get good and ready.

(*Re-enter Markham, and takes his place.*)

Markham Your Majesty, the Lord High Executioner desires to make a report.

Nosco I told you I was not reigning now. Can't you see that I'm tryin' to straighten out this fishin' tackle?

Markham Yes, your Majesty, but the Lord High Executioner desires to make a report.

Nosco There isn't anything to report. I guess I know what's going on in this kingdom. Because I'm not blowing a trumpet all the time, and prancing around all dressed up is no reason that I don't know my business. (*He goes on working and whistling.*)

Markham Pardon me, your Majesty. The Lord High Executioner desires to make a report.

Nosco Of course he does. You can't tell me anything about him. He wants to cut somebody's head off. (*A Servant comes in, and speaks urgently with Markham.*)

Markham Your Majesty, the Lord High Executioner insists upon making a report.

Nosco Oh, if he insists that's different. Send him in. (*The Servant goes out.*)

Markham (opening the portieres) The Lord High Executioner.

(*Enter the Lord High Executioner, with his gilded Axe of Office. He is in black velvet, a solemn High Brow.*)

Executioner (with a low bow) Your Majesty, I am ready to submit my report for the day. (*He unrolls a long scroll.*)

Nosco Wait a minute! (*Digging in the box, he takes out a big fish net, and some tangled line.*) Go ahead.

Executioner Your Majesty, this is an official report.

Nosco So I suppose.

Executioner Pardon me, your Majesty, but an official report will have to be received in an official way.

Nosco Oh bother! (*He rises, hunts his crown, jams it on, lop-sided, sits down and resumes his work.*) Go on.

Executioner (*reading from the scroll with vast satisfaction*) I have the honor to announce that five criminals are to be beheaded today. Shall I read their names?

Nosco No. I don't care about their names. What did they do? A man doesn't have his head cut off because he is John Smith; he dies because he did something. What did they *do*?

Executioner Your Majesty, the first man stole a goose. He is a very desperate character.

Nosco (*thoughtfully*) He is? Was it his first goose?

Executioner (*looking up, puzzled*) Your Majesty?

Nosco (*twinding reel on his fingers*) I mean did he ever steal anything before?

Executioner I don't know.

Nosco Well, you ought to know. That's the sort of thing I expect you to know. Go on.

Executioner The second man shut his wife up in the cellar for three days.

Nosco What did his wife do?

Executioner While she was in the cellar, your Majesty?

Nosco No, before he put her in. What did the woman do?

Executioner (*wiping his brow*) I don't know, your Majesty.

Nosco (*curtly*) Then find out. Go on.

Executioner (*reading*) The third man impeached the integrity of Parliament. The fourth man shot a deer in Lord Hazelknob's park. This is the second time this man has been arrested in ten years. The fifth man used

profane language in the presence of the Lord High Chancellor.

Nosco He had his nerve with him! Did he swear?

Executioner Your Majesty, he swore.

Nosco What did the fourth man do the first time?

Executioner Your Majesty, I do not apprehend your meaning.

Nosco You said the fourth man shot a deer in Lord Hazelknob's park, and that he was arrested ten years ago. What did he do the other time he was arrested?

Executioner (*meekly*) I do not know, your Majesty.

Nosco (*settling his wobbly crown more firmly on his tottered head*) And you call this a report? You want to read up on what a report is. What did you say the third man did?

Executioner (*meekly*) He impeached the integrity of Parliament.

Nosco (*slowly, almost ceasing to wind reel*) "Impeached the integrity of Parliament." That's a new one on me.

Executioner Your Majesty?

Nosco You've got me guessin'. What did he say?

Executioner (*pompously*) Does your Majesty desire to hear the man's exact words?

Nosco Fire ahead.

Executioner I trust your Majesty will pardon me. The man's language is coarse. He is reported to have called The House of Lords "a parcel of silly old fools."

Nosco "Reported to have called." Don't you know whether he did nor not?

Executioner I have good reason, your Majesty, to believe the report is correct.

Nosco (*looking at him quietly until the man quakes and looks away*) What's that man's name?

Executioner (*mopping his anguished brow*) Jeremy Jackson. He's from the Northeast Province.

Nosco Jeremy Jackson. —Markham, write that name down. Have you got it? Jeremy Jackson. I'll look him up. He seems to have a mind of his own. —You

say you don't know what that woman did who was shut up in the cellar?

Executioner (rolling the scroll) It is not recorded, your Majesty.

Nosco Well, it ought to be recorded. That's the sort of thing I want recorded,—*inside facts*. (*Whistles softly, thinking.*) It's a hard job to put a woman in a cellar. There isn't one man in a hundred that can put his wife in the cellar—not if she fights back. A man doesn't do that sort of thing for diversion. When he wants a change he goes to a prize fight. Well, I pardon those five men. Do you understand? All of 'em. (*He puts down the reel with a sigh.*) All of 'em.

Executioner But, your Majesty, they are criminals.

Nosco You haven't proved that they are. I pardon the bunch. Is that all today?

Executioner (in distress) But—your Majesty, I must kill somebody!

Nosco (stooping over the box) Eh? (*His crown falls off.*)

Executioner I must execute somebody. I am not earning my salary.

Nosco Either am I. I don't know who is. Don't let a little thing like that trouble you. We don't need an Executioner in this kingdom, anyhow. The people are good enough if we let them alone.

Executioner (trembling as to his knees) Your Majesty, how could there be a kingdom without an Executioner?

Nosco (scornfully) Oh, you're not going to lose your job! Don't be scared. But if you ever kill a man without asking me first I'll cut your head off good and proper. Give each of those men a bath, and a new suit of clothes, and some money, and turn them loose.

Executioner (tremblingly) Your Majesty! . . . Is this official?

Nosco (putting on his crown, hastily, climbing to The Throne, and seating himself) Give each of those men a bath, and a new suit of clothes, and ten dollars in gold,

with my compliments, and turn them loose. 'Take a vacation. Get it off your mind. Read a good book; go fishin'. I'm going myself, after while.

Executioner (with an injured air) Your Majesty, I bid you good morning.

Nosco (dryly) Good morning. (*The Executioner stalks out. Nosco descends from The Throne, takes off his crown, and puts it carelessly on a low hassock. Then he shakes his head as if to shake off water.*)

(*Enter a Servant, and speaks with Markham.*)

Markham Her Majesty, the Queen Consort.

(*Enter Queen Matilda, attended by a Lady in Waiting. The latter seats herself near Markham.*)

Queen Those foreign representatives have come. You are to give them an audience at five o'clock.

Nosco (fitting together the joints of an extension rod) Who says I am?

Queen The Chancellor.

Nosco (whipping the air softly with the lithe rod) The Chancellor is mistaken. I'm going fishing this afternoon. (*She looks reproachfully at him, with bitten lip.*) Oh, I know what you think! Your father never went fishin'; he wore his crown all the time, and reigned and reigned to beat the band! He'd rather go to Parliament than go hunting any day. I'm not that sort. I'm tired of Chancellors and Parliaments and all that fuss and fuddle. No matter what I'm doing I've got to stop and put on my crown and reign a while! I'd like to get out and do things,—make my own money and spend it as I please. I'm tired of having a lot of noddleheads tell me how much I can spend; other men don't; they spend what they please. I wish I were a pirate or a banker!

Queen I do not want to be a pirate's wife. What is a pirate? They aren't respectable.

Nosco What is a King? They don't do anything worth while.

Queen (*going to his side*) Have you the indigestion today?

Nosco (*waving her aside*) Now there it goes again! If a King shows any commonsense he has the indigestion! I wish you would go 'way! I'm tryin' to get ready to go fishin'.

Queen (*with an air*) Certainly I will go away. It is no pleasure to talk with a King who would rather be a pirate or a banker! Do you wish to view the Prince this morning?

Nosco Is he sick?

Queen No, but it is customary for the King to view the Heir Apparent every morning. My father always did.

Nosco (*whipping the air softly with the rod*) My dear, your Father was doubtless a very fine King, but I am running this country.

Queen Then you do not wish to see your child?

Nosco Why yes, I do. I always want to see His Nibs. He's the finest ever. Bring him in by all means. (*The Queen goes, attended by the Lady, with much ceremony.*)

Nosco (*whipping the air*) Markham, what do you think of this rod?

Markham (*looking up*) It looks like a very fine rod, your Majesty.

Nosco Well sir, I've had this rod six years. In that time I've been fishin' twice . . . How many times have you been fishin' in six years?

Markham Six times, your Majesty. I go every summer.

Nosco (*whipping the air slowly*) Now you see the difference between a King and a freeman . . . A King is not a slave, yet he is not a freedman; he is not a servant, yet he is not his own master; he commands everybody, yet he can not do as he pleases . . . Markham, what is a King? I wish somebody would tell me that!

Markham The histories say he is a chosen one, your Majesty.

Nosco (*slowly*) Chosen . . . chosen for what?

Markham Chosen to govern the people, I suppose. That is what he does, is it not, your Majesty?

Nosco The very last thing he does is to govern the people. He drives them, and kills them, and bulldozes them, and strangles 'em, and works 'em, but I tell you, Markham, it's all rot about his governing them. The man who assumes that he is able to control the lives of millions of people is a madman, a knave, or (*shrugs*)—a humorist! (*He picks up the crown from the hassock, turning it around curiously, viewing it from every angle. Sighs, puts it down, and looks up wistfully.*) This King business is getting pretty thin. The people are done with us. It was worn out a hundred years ago. Even the genius of Napoleon could not revive it. One of these long come skirts a big war will bowl us over like ten pins. Markham, I've a notion to go while the goin's good.

(*Enter a Page, who stands on his toes to whisper to Markham.*)

Markham (*gently*) His Royal Highness, The Heir Apparent; Her Majesty, The Queen Consort. (*Smilingly, he holds the portieres wide.*)

(*Enter Queen Matilda, and the Nurse, carrying a baby [a large doll] in very long, very lacey robes. She is attended by two little Pages, one carrying white wraps, the other, a tray with bottles on it and a silver cup. A Lady in Waiting comes last, all smiles and bows and solicitude. Nosco rises.*)

Queen You ought to wear your crown when you are viewing The Heir Apparent. My father always did.

Nosco (*looking at the baby*) I'm not viewing him as a King, but as a father.—Hello, there, Nubbins!—I didn't know he had such a squint!

Nurse Your Majesty is mistaken. The light hurts His Royal Highness's eyes. (*Markham looks around anxiously, and draws the portieres very close.*)

Nosco Oh, is that it? Will his nose get straight?

Nurse Your Majesty, the Prince has a beautiful nose.

Queen He has his grandfather's nose, hasn't he, mother's dearest tootsy-wootsy? Mother's little man!

Nosco (*indicating the tray*) What are these for? Is he sick?

Nurse Your Majesty, his Royal Highness is not ill, but he sneezed this morning at six o'clock.

Lady Pardon me, it was exactly ten minutes of six when he sneezed.—A most violent sneeze, your Majesty. It quite frightened us, I assure you.

Page If he sneezed at ten minutes of six then he sneezed twice, 'cause I heard him sneeze at six o'clock, right on the dot, and I said to Archibald, "His Royal Highness is a-catchin' cold."—Didn't I, Archibald? (*The other Page nods gravely; the Nurse looks highly gratified by this voluntary testimony.*)

Queen (*to the Lady*) Is it possible he sneezed twice, and I was not informed of it? (*There is an accusing silence.*) You must be more careful.—He frightens us terribly, he does, mother's precious lambkin!—The Court physicians do not consider him a strong child.

Nosco That's all they know about it.—Won't they even let you sneeze, Nubbins? It's hard lines, old man.—If his nose straightens out he'll be a fine looker. He doesn't know me from Adam. How old is he?

Nurse Three months and five days, your Majesty.

Lady Pardon me. Three months and seven days.—Is it not so, your Majesty?

Queen Three months and seven days, Madam. You are right.

Nosco You don't tell me! I thought he would be bigger!

Queen Bless his heart, mother's only treasure lamb! He's a big boy, so he is, Mother's tootsy wootsy!—Nurse, I think he's going to sneeze again. (*There is great excitement among the women folk.*) Look, his nose is all wrinkled up.

Lady Your Majesty, I think he is trying to smile at his father.

Queen No, no, he's going to sneeze! Put another robe around him!

Lady Give him some of the cough mixture. (*This is administered during breathless suspense.*)

Nosco Nubbins, if you were Jeremy Jackson's boy you might sneeze your head off.

Queen (*to the Page*) Be ready with the cough mixture . . . There, he is trying to smile, the darling!

Nosco The poor little rat! He needs more air and less clothes! Well, take him away. I'll finish this tackle.—Good bye, Nubbins! When you grow up, you can help me be King. (*The party goes out in state, a process requiring time and manners. Markham, smiling, lends what assistance he can. Nosco walks around, his hands clasped behind him, thinkin'.*)

(*Enters a Servant, who confers with Markham.*)

Markham The Court Minstrel, your Majesty. (*Nosco eyes him silently, and goes on pacing the floor.*) The Court Minstrel, your Majesty.

Nosco So you remarked before. What about him?

Markham He desires to see your Majesty.

Nosco He wants to sing to me, and I've got to sit and take it. That's what comes of being a King! . . . Do you know that man can't sing a little bit? He thinks I won't pay his salary unless he sings to me; I'd pay him three times his salary if he wouldn't sing . . . I read a book once called "Hedged In." That's all I remember about it, just the title; "Hedged In." . . . "Hedged In."—Well, bring in the Minstrel Boy!

Markham (*holding open the curtain*) The Court Minstrel, your Majesty.

(*Enter the Minstrel, dressed like a Real Poet. He carries a roll of music, and a ribboned scroll.*)

Minstrel (*with graceful bends*) Hail to your Majesty! Hail, hail, hail!

Nosco (*coldly*) Good morning.

Minstrel Permit me to inquire regarding the state of your Majesty's health. I hope I see you well.

Nosco (*curtly*) First rate. How are you?

Minstrel (*his hand on his heart, bowing*) Your Majesty is most considerate to ask after the well-being of a humble poet. I find myself enjoying uninterrupted good health, your Majesty. (*He places the music on the table.*) My gracious Sovereign, permit me to offer you some poetic refreshment this beautiful morning. I will read an *Ode to Posterity*, finished but yester-night. (*He bows and unrolls the scroll.*)

Nosco (*seating himself on the Throne steps*) Are you going to sing, too?

Minstrel Later, if it please your Majesty.

(*Enter the Chancellor, in haste*)

Nosco (*with a delighted, wicked grin*) Just in time, Chancellor! "Permit me offer you some poetic refreshment this beautiful morning."

Chancellor (*with a stiff bow that includes both men*) Pardon my entering in haste, and unannounced. Your Majesty, Parliament is assembled, and matters of urgency are up for consideration. They await your pleasure.

Nosco I'm glad to hear it. Just now my pleasure is to hear poetry. (*The Minstrel is intensely gratified*) Your arrival is most opportune. Be seated. We'll hear an *Ode to Posterity*.

Chancellor Parliament is assembled, your Majesty.

Nosco So I understand. Be seated. You work too hard, Chancellor. You need recreation. Be seated. I insist. (*The Chancellor seats himself with evident reluctance.*) Now, let's hear *The Ode*.

Minstrel (*having prepared and preened to his satisfaction, he reads*)

AN ODE TO POSTERITY

“Oh ye projected, though as yet uncome ;
Yet uncompacted atoms yet unpacked, —
Posterity !
‘This bark of thought, my rythmic soul shall guard
‘Til Time shall summon thee !
Today the myriads gloat on purile prose ;
‘They ruthless crush the poet’s rose ;
‘This throbbing Earth, this ball of dirt,
‘This orb of junk, this peopled sphere
Knows not, dreams not that I am Here !
‘The world, in selfness curled,
Rejects my gemlets, as but things for scorn ;
My toots find echo in their hoots,
‘The brutes !”

Nosco (*nursing his knees cosily*) ‘That’s going some.
— Chancellor, what do you think of that?

Chancellor (*stiffly*). It is true, your Majesty, that the poet’s effusions are often neglected by the world. It would seem inevitable that in the pressure of the significant affairs of life so slight a thing as poetry should sink to the level of a mere amusement. And, if I may be permitted to add, an amusement too often of a frivolous nature.

Nosco (*gravely*) Just so. (*to the Minstrel*) Do read something else.

Minstrel Your Majesty, I am flattered,—honored,—exalted! How would you like a simple gemlet on *The Inness of Myself*?

Nosco (*enjoying the Chancellor’s chagrin*) No, no, give us another Ode. I like your fire-eating style. Possibly Chancellor would prefer a song, however.—Speak up, Chancellor. “Do not be backward about coming forward.”

Chancellor Your Majesty, it is my pleasure to defer to your taste in the matter.

Nosco (leaning back with an air of enjoyment) That's very handsome of you, Chancellor. Then we'll have a song. (to the Minstrel) Give us something lively.

Minstrel (opening the music roll) With your gracious permission, (bows to both men with smirking grace) I will sing of love. 'Tis the theme best suited to the joyous season of the year. (After some preliminary trills and quavers, he sings, with éclat, "In the Gloaming!")

Nosco (when the Minstrel has subsided) A man in love is a poet; if he lives through it, he is a skeptic. We can't have any more music just now. I've got to give Parliament a round-up. Go sing to the Queen. She's got company today.

Minstrel (preparing to depart) The Queen is the charming patroness of all beautiful things. Your Majesty, (bows to *Nosco*), my lord, (bows to Chancellor), adieu, adieu, adieu! (He bows himself out—sort of melts away.)

Nosco (rising) Well, to return to earth. You say Parliament is assembled? Do I make a speech today?

Chancellor You do, your Majesty.

Nosco (unjointing the rod) What about?

Chancellor (rising) The Annexation of Fire Island.

Nosco (putting the rod in its own box) Do I favor it?

Chancellor You do, your Majesty.

Nosco (putting the box in the big box, and banging down the lid) Have you got my speech ready? (The Chancellor bows. Rising to ring, *Nosco* dislodges the fish net that hangs over a chair. It falls on the hassock, completely covering the crown.) I hope it's type-written. Your writing's frightfully hard to read. And make it short. I can't spend all afternoon reading a speech about Fire Island! (He rings the bell again.) Where's my crown?—Markham, let this net alone till I get back. And don't touch those books.

(Enter a Servant.)

(to the Servant) Go get my cloak, and order the coach. (The Servant bows, and hurries out.) Where is my crown?

Chancellor (hunting) You had it last, your Majesty.

Nosco (irritably, hunting in haste) Of course. It's my crown. (*They search in silence.*) Go get my speech, if you please. And meet me at the coach. (*The Chancellor goes.*) Markham, watch out for those books. You know my crown's not under *them*! (*Bangs around, hunting. A Servant comes in with a long crimson cape, ermine-lined, puts it on a chair, and retires.*) I'll never get anything done, everybody interrupting me this way! I can never do anything I want to. Just as soon as I get interested in something, Parliament goes and has a meeting! I'll go without my crown. Who cares?

Markham (hunting quietly) We'll find it yet.

Nosco I don't care if we don't. Where's my scepter? I haven't seen it for an age!

Markham (spying it under the table) Here it is, your Majesty.

Nosco (snickering) Almost got lost in the shuffle, didn't it? This scepter is tarnished. (*polishes it with his handkerchief*) You make me tired. It's a pity you can't even keep my scepter in shape. A houseful of servants, and I have to polish my own jewelry!

Markham (lifting the net) Here's your crown. (*He disentangles it, smiling.*)

Nosco Be careful of that net, you'll tear it! Watch out there! . . . Here, let me! Go get me a clean handkerchief. Hurry! I hear the Chancellor on the stairs. He's mad now as a hornet! Go up the back stairs! (*Markham goes out on the run. Nosco disentangles his crown, with care and patience, unwinds a fish line that is wound around it, jams it on, ties the cape around his neck in a hard knot, grabs his scepter, and rushes out.*)

(Curtain)

ACT II

THE THRONE ROOM, SEVERAL DAYS LATER

(*The Throne Room. Many books scattered over the steps of The Throne, and the King's crimson robe trails carelessly over it. The Lord High Chancellor is discovered, waiting. Markham stands by the curtained door.*)

Markham The Duke of Naught, my Lord. (*The Chancellor rises.*)

(*Enter the Duke of Naught, dapper, correct and stylish.*)

Duke Good morning, Chancellor.

Chancellor (*with a profound bow*) Good morning, my Lord.

Duke Are you waiting for the King?

Chancellor I am, my Lord. There is more trouble in the Northeast Province.

Duke (*seating himself*) So I understand. I have advised the King to proceed at once to the scene of action. Rebellion is not a thing to be tolerated.

Chancellor (*seating himself*) Precisely what I advised, my Lord. I should say that the King's presence is imperative in the Northeast Province at this time.

Duke He does not seem to have much confidence in the Army any more. Have you noticed the change in him?

Chancellor It gives me pain to state that I have, my Lord. (*There is a pause.*) It gives me pain to acknowledge that your brother does not give the same attention to affairs of state that he once did. His attitude toward matters of public import seems adverse, if I may be allowed the use of so strong an expression. I may be wrong, but so it appears to me.

Markham (*holding aside the portieres*) The Minister of Finance.

(*Enter the Minister of Finance, with huge ledgers.*)

Minister (a bustling busybody) Good morning, my lords. Good morning. (*The men rise and bow with great respect.*) Where is the King?

Duke He has gone for an early ride. We expect him at any minute.

Minister (*pacing up and down*) He must levy a new tax immediately. The Treasury is almost empty, and Parliament is asking for more warships. We must have money. I have informed the King of our condition, but he takes no action.

Chancellor (*nodding significantly to the Duke*) What is our condition, my lord?

Minister We are defenseless by land and sea. We have no modern guns, no airships, no transports. Look at our harbors. Look at our coastwise defences. Suppose a hostile power should attack us tomorrow. What could we do? We could stand and take it, or run and leave it. In any event we would be defeated, my lords and gentlemen; defeated with slaughter and rout,—thrashed, in short, within an inch of our lives! We need guns, warships, transports, balloons, motors, cannon,—everything that makes a nation powerful in defense. Our Navy is all run down at the heel. (*Off-stage a trumpet sounds three times.*)

Markham (*solemnly*) The King is approaching the Palace.

Minister To compete with our neighbors, we must buy these things; to buy these things, we must have money; to raise money, we must raise the taxes.

Chancellor How about a new bond issue, my lord?

Minister (*raising his right hand to Heaven*) Never, never, while the breath of life is in my body. I will oppose it to my latest hour. Live or die, sink or swim, I pin my faith to taxes.

Duke The King will not raise the taxes, my lord. You know that as well as we do.

Minister (*prancing about, highly excited*) But he must. The safety of the country demands it; Parliament

demands it; common sense demands it. (*Off-stage a trumpet sounds twice.*)

Markham The King has arrived at the Palace.

Duke He says war is nonsense.

Minister He is mistaken. War is national life; war is the foundation of prosperity. His Majesty must be convinced of this. I trust you will pardon the criticism of his Majesty that such a position upon my part seems to imply, but it is my duty to speak out. The danger of the country demands that I no longer gloss matters over. The sinews of war are the sinews of national progress; show me the nation that is great and powerful; it is a fighting nation; show me a nation that is creating wealth; it is the fighting nation; show me the nation that is getting on in the world,—it is THE FIGHTING NATION! War is always a possible contingency; the wise government is one that keeps its cannon cocked. We must talk war until this country rings with it: war, war, war; money, money, money; power, power, POWER!

Chancellor But there is nothing new to tax.

Duke What do you propose, my Lord?

Minister (*sitting down, tuckered out*) I propose to put a tax on false hair. It has been exempt on the ground of being a necessity; we will make it a luxury.

Chancellor Then the women will stop wearing it.

Duke The poorer classes will. The rich women will wear more.

Minister (*smiling blandly*) We will make all women wear it by making it the fashion.

Duke That is paramount to making it a necessity.

Minister That is the point. By making false hair the fashion, we make it a necessity, but we call it a luxury. Such is the nature of women that the fashion is a necessity. The theory is sound. (*He spreads his hands.*) We tax the luxury.

Markham My lords, the King! (*The men rise instantly.*)

(*Enter King Nosco, in a natty riding outfit, booted and spurred. He carries a broad felt hat, and a riding whip. Also, he has a red flower on his coat lapel.*)

Nosco (buoyantly) Good morning, my lords! Beautiful morning! You look as solemn as owls! Anything the matter?

Duke (opening his portfolio) Fire Island wants home rule.

Chancellor There is a new outbreak in the Northeast Province.

Minister (dramatically) The Treasury is empty!!

Nosco Oh, I thought it was something serious! Cheer up. It's a beautiful morning. (*He turns, smiling, to the Chancellor.*) Go to the Northeast Province right away, and tell those people—Oh, Markham, bring me my crown! (*Markham hurries out.*) These people are right, and they know it. If I lived up there I wouldn't stand for that road.

Chancellor Pardon me, your Majesty, a revolt is a revolt.

Nosco (seating himself on a chair arm) It is. I agree with you. A revolt that is not a revolt is something else.

Chancellor Ten more have joined the revolutionists, your Majesty.

Nosco If you had a farm of four acres, and a family of eight children, what would you do if the King's Road spoiled your best fields?

Chancellor (patiently) A revolt is a revolt, your Majesty. One can not think of the people in such a crisis.

Nosco (flecking his boot with his whip) Just when can one think of the people?

Chancellor (stiffly) Pardon me, your Majesty. A King can not put aside questions of state to think about the people.

Nosco (with sudden sternness) But questions of state have to do with the people. The people *are* the

state. The French proved that in 1793, once for all. It is a little foible of mine to think of the people. So what then? (*A silence falls.*)

(*Enter Markham*)

Markham Your Majesty, do you remember where you had your crown last?

Nosco No, I don't. But it doesn't matter. If these gentlemen will pardon me, we'll hustle through these matters without ceremony.

Chancellor I am of the opinion that your Majesty should wear your crown when you are considering questions of state.

Duke That is my opinion, your Majesty.

Minister I concur in this opinion, your Majesty.

Nosco (*to Markham*) 'Then we've got to find it. Did you ask the Queen?

Markham Yes, your Majesty. Her Majesty has not seen it since yesteday. (*He hunts; Nosco drums idly with the butt of his whip; the other men wait with manifest patience.*)

Nosco (*springing up*) Oh, I know where I left it! Excuse me, gentlemen. (*He cuts out.*)

Chancellor (*after a pause*) This delay is very much to be regretted. Every hour the revolution is becoming more formidable.

Minister And every hour our position, as a nation without defenses, is becoming more precarious.

(*Enter a Servant, with the crown on a purple cushion.*)

Servant (*with a low bow*) The King's crown.

Markham (*taking it*) Where did you find it?

Servant In the summer house. (*He backs out of the room. The Minister looks over his ledgers; the Duke yawns politely; the Chancellor looks straight ahead. Markham dusts the crown with his handkerchief, his face a study of half-smiling tenderness.*)

(*Re-enter Nosco, twirling a garden rose.*)

Nosco The garden is delicious, and here we sit, croaking of wars and rumors of wars!—Oh, you found it! (*He puts on the crown carelessly, and re-seats himself on the chair arm.*) I thought I left it in the summer house, but it wasn't there.—Chancellor, go to the Northeast Province right away. Send home the Royal Reserve, discharge ninety-five deputies, stop work on the road, pay off the workmen, and tell the people to write down exactly what they want.

Duke Your Majesty, it is rebellion!

Chancellor (*helplessly*) It is revolt!

Minister (*groaning*) It is treason!

Nosco (*beating a tattoo against the chair*) Suppose it were, gentlemen. Rebellion is the line of most resistance. It is suffering raised to the Nth power. People don't rebel till they have to; it's too much trouble; it's too dangerous and uncomfortable. And when they do, you can't kill the grievance by shooting everybody in sight. (*to the Chancellor*) Tell the people to write down plainly what they want, and bring the petition to me.

Duke Such a course is unprecedented!

Chancellor It is untraditional!

Minister (*pounding the table*) It is unconstitutional!

Nosco (*with a smile, to the Chancellor*) Start as soon as possible; it'll take three days the best time you can make. (*The Chancellor goes, indignant. Nosco turns to the Duke, cheerfully.*) Fire Island can have home rule. Go and tell them so. (*The Minister all but collapses.*)

Duke But they don't know enough to rule themselves!

Nosco My dear brother, show me the man that knows enough to rule himself! We're only strong on ruling the other fellow. Let 'em learn, since they think they want to. Tell 'em to elect a King, and whoop things up!

Duke (*rising, and speaking, as from a tomb*) There will be trouble, your Majesty. The people are very ignorant. If you're going to put the power into the hands of the people —

Nosco (*genially*) I'm not. They've always had it. What saves your head and mine is that they don't know it. (*Rising, he holds out his hand.*) Good bye, old boy! Take care of yourself. Let us know how you come on. If there's any fun going, stay and enjoy it. (*The Duke goes, boiling with rage.*)—Now, my lord, what did you say about the Treasury?

Minister (*meekly*) It is empty, your Majesty.

Nosco (*seating himself on the lowest step of The Throne, and enjoying the rose*) Have a chair. I'm in no hurry. Now, what do you mean? Haven't we any money at all, — not a dollar?

Minister (*opening a big, big ledger*) Your Majesty, there is enough for current expenses.

Nosco How many months can we run on what we got?

Minister Pardon me, that is not the question, your Majesty. It is not a question of how long we can run, but of how we are running, and what we are running into. If I have ten cents, and I'm in debt five cents, I am safe, am I not?

Nosco You are. You're ahead five cents.

Minister Precisely. I am ahead five cents. If I have ten cents, and have to buy something that costs fifteen cents, I am in debt, am I not?

Nosco If you buy the thing you're in debt five cents' worth. If you don't buy, you're O. K. Well?

Minister That is our condition in a nut shell. We have to buy fifteen cents' worth, and we have only ten cents.

Nosco Then we won't buy.

Minister We must buy. We must buy warships, transports, cannon, airships, guns,—everything for defense. We are in danger of total annihilation.

Nosco (*sitting erect with a jerk*) You're talking War. You might as well talk mumbly-peg. I won't buy any more warships; I won't buy any guns, and I won't buy any transports. I don't believe the way to run a country is to kill off all the able-bodied men, or keep them standing in a row, dressed up like candy sticks! If I can't

run this country without war, I'll resign. Is that all today?

Minister (*wiping his eyes*) Your Majesty, we may be attacked any hour, and swept off the face of the earth. There is not an up-to-date battleship in the Royal Navy; if the fact were known abroad, this country would probably be wiped out of existence within twenty-four hours.

Nosco (*gravely*) Then keep it dark.

Minister But is this official?

Nosco (*stalking up the steps to The Throne, and sitting down with a thud*) No more warships, no more transports, no more anything that makes war, means war, or is war. This is official.

Minister (*gathering up his ledgers*) It is suicide, your Majesty. It is suicide. We will be cut down like grass,—cut down like grass. (*He stumbles out, quite bowed with sorrow.*)

Nosco (*after a silence, holding out his crown*) Markham, how much will you give me for my crown?

Markham (*looking up*) I have not money enough to buy it, your Majesty.

Nosco I will sell it cheap. It is too small for my head.

Markham I have not money enough to buy it, your Majesty.

Nosco (*regarding it at arm's length*) I don't seem to care any more for the things this crown stands for . . . Won't you even make me an offer, Markham?

Markham (*looking down, his voice trembling*) I have not money enough to buy it, your Majesty.

Nosco (*sadly*) No, I suppose not . . . I suppose not. And yet I pay you good wages. Don't I, Markham, pay you good wages?

Markham (*starts eagerly for The Throne, then, remembering that he is a servant, stops short on the second step and backs down humbly, standing with sad, lifted face*) Your Majesty! Your Majesty! You are the faithfulest master a man ever had . . . Your Majesty!

Nosco (*after a pause, brusquely*) Go watch that door! Somebody will shoot me yet, you rascal! (*With*

a happy smile Markham returns to his place. Nosco, putting the crown beside him, curls down with a book to read. Markham steals a wistful glance at him now and then. Nosco becomes absorbed in his book.)

(Enter the Queen's Page, who speaks to Markham.)

Markham Her Majesty, the Queen Consort.

(Enter Queen Matilda, with her crown on. She carries an embroidery frame. With a nod she dismisses the Page, who goes out.)

Queen Oh, are you reading?

Nosco (not looking up) No, I am trying to read.

Queen You need not be sarcastic. I am sure I never interrupt you . . . This Throne is a sight! (She begins to pick up books.) It looks like a second-hand shop.

Nosco Hold on there! Let those books alone! You'll get me all mixed up!

Queen But it looks so bad!

Nosco The inside of my head would look worse if they weren't there. (reads)

Queen (taking his crown up) Your crown needs cleaning. Well, I'll declare, it's all muddy! . . . Mud, of all things! I should think you would be more careful. (Cleans it with a laced handkerchief.) It is a beautiful crown. (She seats herself beside him, to embroider.) I presume you are reading one of those horrid Socialism books. That's what makes you so queer. Everybody is talking about it. Queen Agria says it's Socialism that's the matter with you. She hates the very word. She says it makes people crazy. (Nosco, reading, hears none of this.) And she says you aren't a bit like any King she ever saw.—Did you hear what I said? She says you aren't a bit like any King she ever saw. (Nosco looks up, frowning.) There, you didn't hear a word! Listen! Queen Agria says it's Socialism that's the matter with you. And she says you aren't a bit like any King she's ever known. And you aren't, you know. You aren't a bit like my Father. Are you tired of being King?

Nosco Yes.

Queen (*with a gasp*) Oh, you are? Does anybody know? But you'll have to go on reigning, just the same, won't you? A King can never be anything but a King. He can not turn into a common man again.

Nosco Do you think my brother would make a good King?

Queen Not so good a King as you if you would behave yourself.

Nosco What do you mean?

Queen Why, if you would build warships, and wear stylish clothes, and kill rebels and—and *act* like a King, you know. And not think Socialism thoughts. I don't think a King ought to have the same thoughts that common people have.

Nosco They haven't, the more's the pity. How can I think other thoughts than the thoughts I have to think?

Queen But you do not *try* to think King thoughts. You would rather think common thoughts. (*There is a painful silence.*) Well, you'd better see Agria. She's waited long enough for an audience, goodness knows. Poor thing, she cries all the time. You must wear your crown when you talk with her. I'll go bring her in. (*She goes out with sad dignity.*)

Nosco (*having read a page or two, banging the book shut*) There, I've finished that chapter, if I never read another! (*He rises, yawns, puts on his crown, then takes it off, to hold it in both hands, staring at it.*) A crown. (*regards it from every angle*) A crown. It's no great thing. And my boy'll have to wear one all his life. I'd rather break rocks on an uphill farm than wear the thing. I would. But what can I do? I can't strike; I can't revolt; I can't mutiny. There's nothing a King can do but stand it. And my boy's got to be King. (*He slams it on, and sits down to read.*)

(*Enter the Queen's Page, who confers with Markham.*)

Markham Her Majesty, the Queen Consort, and Queen Agria.

(*Enter Queen Matilda, royal-robed and crowned, and Queen Agria, the latter in profound and trailing mourning, attended by a Lady and a Page, both in mourning.*)

Nosco (*rising, with sympathy in his face, and stepping to the floor, book in hand*) Queen Agria, I am glad to see you, and to hear what you have to say. I hope I may be able to do something for you. (*She kneels*) Madam, do not kneel. I—I—er—I am not that sort of a King. Please get up . . . Oh please get up!—Markham, place chairs for the ladies.—Now, what can I do for you, Madam?

Agria (*taking smelling-salts from the Lady*) I have only one favor to ask of you, King Nosco. I want you to help me get my kingdom back.

Nosco (*re-seating himself on The Throne*) I can not promise to do that, Madam.

Agria (*weeping effectively*) But you will promise when you have heard my story. My husband has been dead many years. My sons are dead. I am alone in the world. (*The Queen presses her hand, the Lady and Page are nigh to tears.*) For ten years I ruled, and there was peace and happiness in my kingdom. Then a stranger came to my Court. He was an American, they said, and I entertained him. He was made much of by my Court. We did all we could for him.

Nosco (*wagging his head with sympathy*) I am sure you did, Madam.

Agria He gave lectures. He wrote books. He had wonderful ideas about Kings and Queens, and the people thought he was great. He said he was Socialist, and he said —

Nosco (*eagerly, leaning forward*) A Socialist? What were some of his books? Where is he now? What did he lecture about? Did he believe in war? What was his name? Was he clever?

Agria I can not speak of him, your Majesty. It agitates me too much. He is now King of my realm, and I

am an outcast. (*The Lady and Page minister to her, dissolved in tears.*)

Nosco He must be a very clever sort of person.

Agria He may be a very clever person, but he is a very wicked person. He is as ingrate; a base ingrate. (*The Queen soothes her.*) Enough of him. Let his name perish from the annals of history! What I want you to do is to go there with an army, and kill him, and get my kingdom back.

Nosco I can not do that, Madam.

Agria You say you wish to help me, and that is all you can do for me. And people say you are a good King. (*She weeps.*)

Nosco But Madam, think what you ask me to do. I can not take my soldiers into a foreign country, and kill the King because he is a Socialist. I don't think he can be a Socialist, anyway. Socialists don't believe in Kings; they are for hanging them all on sight.

Agria (*weeping gracefully*) I want my kingdom back! I want my kingdom back! I did not think you could be so cruel. And they told me you were such a good King!

Nosco (*distressed*) Please do not cry. Madam, please! (*She weeps persistently, the Lady and Page being in tears.*) Madam, you will make yourself sick; you will indeed.

Agria I want my kingdom back! I want my kingdom back! Oh that I should live to see this day!

Nosco Indeed, Madam, you will be sick! . . . I tell you what to do. Please listen. Live here in my kingdom. Get busy. Can you paint china?

Agria (*sitting very straight*) I am a Queen!

Nosco (*earnestly*) Forget it. You're welcome to all we got, but of course you must have something to do, then you won't think about your troubles. Let me think. Learn dressmaking. That's the ticket!

Agria I? . . . I am a Queen! (*The Queen motions Nosco to desist.*)

Nosco But you needn't tell it. Besides, no person of sense will hold it up against you. You could make a fine living at dressmaking.—Couldn't she? (*to the agitated and indignant Queen.*)

Agria (*rising*) King *Nosco*, hear me. Once for all, hear me. I came unfriended to your Court. I am a poor, defenseless, exiled woman, but you shall not make light of my misfortunes. I am alone in the world, but you shall not affront my dignity. I was born a Queen; I shall live and die a Queen. I ask you to get my kingdom back, and what do you answer me? You advise me to learn dressmaking! I ask you to kill the man who stole my throne, and what do you ask me; *if I can paint china?* I, with the proudest blood of the House of Schlossberger-Hammer in my veins! I, the daughter of a King; I, the widow of a King; I, a Queen in my own right; I, the mother of Princes! What manner of King are you that you dare propose such a thing? I expected kindness and sympathy, and I find none. Your heart is hard and cruel; your professions of friendship, a hollow mockery. Farewell! (*The Lady supports her, the Page fluttering around them, half distraught.*)

Nosco (*surprised and rattled*) Why, Madam, I—er—I—I er hope you will stay here with us. You're welcome. (*to the Queen*) You tell her she is.

Agria (*grandly*) You teach me how a beggar should be answered. There is no place in the world for an outcast. I am alone, alone! Oh, that I should live to see this hour! Struck down by the hand of a friend, deserted on the very threshold of Hope! Farewell, Oh false and cruel King! (*The party goes out, Agria in a fine frenzy.*)

Nosco Now what do you know about that? Do you know much about women?

Markham No, your Majesty.

Nosco (*staring at the door*) I don't know what ails that woman.

(*A Servant comes, and speaks to Markham.*)

Markham The Lord High Chancellor.

(Enter the Chancellor)

Chancellor (bowing) Your Majesty, the King of the Feejee Islands has just arrived at the Palace, and desires to pay his respects to your Majesty.

Nosco The Feejee Islands. The Feejee Islands. That's a new game on me. Is that a Chinese word? Where are those islands?

Chancellor They are—they are, er, the Feejee Islands are in the South Sea, your Majesty.

Nosco I've never heard of them. Is he a big King?

Chancellor About your size, your Majesty.

Nosco What's he doing so far away from home?

Chancellor He is traveling for pleasure, your Majesty.

Nosco (dimpling) Oh! Just for fun!

Chancellor (bowing) Pardon me, your Majesty. I said for pleasure.

Nosco (looking him squarely in the eye) And I said for fun. I'll see that King. He must be a pretty good sort. Give him my compliments, and say I'll be glad to see him. All of you tog up, and bring him in, and tell the Queen he'll be here to lunch. *(The Chancellor bows, and withdraws. Nosco rises, and looks himself over.)* Are these clothes good enough to see a real King in? I haven't time to change.

Markham I think so, your Majesty.

Nosco Please get my chain, and the ribbons and things I wear when I got to. They'll help some. *(Markham goes hastily.)* He's a good sort. Any King that gets out just for fun is the right sort. *(He polishes his boots with his handkerchief.)* Maybe he's making a tour of the world. I wish I might. *(Markham brings in his regalia.)* Is my crown on straight? I wonder is he a Socialist? Straighten out that table. Everything looks like the deuce. *(He puts on his regalia.)* My scepter's in the tackle box. I had it yesterday. And fix that rug. *(He stores away the book under The Throne.)* Do you know anything about the Feejees?

Markham There was a picture of a Feejee in my geography at school. He had hair like a tumbleweed.

Nosco (*rubbing up his scepter*) I guess they're a mighty fine people, or he wouldn't be out seeing the world. He'd be at home buying warships and cutting people's heads off.

Markham (*taking his place by the portieres*) Yes, your Majesty, he probably would.

(*Enter a resplendant Page, and confers with Markham.*)

Markham Are you ready to see the Court, your Majesty?

Nosco I am. (*The Page goes out*) Do you know I think this is going to be something worth while, this King?

Markham Yes, your Majesty. (*Nosco sits erect, listening, eager.*) The Court, your Majesty. And King Rococo, of the Feejee Islands.

(*Enter the Court. The Lord High Chancellor, with the King of the Feejee Islands, got up in barbaric splendor with certain concessions to European prejudices. The Executioner, with his Axe, the Duke of Naught, the Minister, the Minstrel, two dandified courtiers, and two little Pages. The entrance is ceremonial.*)

Chancellor (*advancing*) Your Majesty, King Rococo, of the Feejee Islands.

Nosco (*stepping to the floor*) I am glad to see you, King Rococo. (*extends his hand*) Mighty glad.

Rococo (*with a territorial grin*) I'm glad to see you. I've heard a heap about your kingdom.

Nosco I don't know why you should. We do things the same old way here. This is my Court, you see; just the same as other courts. This is my Lord High Chancellor. You just caught him in time. He's going away tonight, on a peace mission.—Chancellor, shake hands with King Rococo. (*The Chancellor shakes hands with*

ramrod dignity.) The Lord High Executioner. (*The Executioner stalks forward in a bloodthirsty manner.*) He does a good deal of damage with his little hatchet—if I don't see him first!—Shake hands with King Rococo, my lord. Here is my Minister of Finance, Lord Firebugg. He wants to fight all the time, whether or no. (*Firebugg extends a hearty hand.*) This is the Court Minstrel. (*The Minstrel glides forward, gazing soulfully at Rococo.*) He writes poetry; that's the worst thing I know about him. And this is my brother, the Duke of Naught. (*The dapper Duke steps forward haughtily, and shakes hands ditto.*) He'd make a fine King if he had half a chance. And this is Lord Nabob, and Lord Elite. All they have to do is to stand around and look stylish. And these little shavers are for style, too.—Boys, shake hands with a real King. (*The Pages advance timidly, rather awed.*)

Rococo (*sizing up the array*) It's a bangup good Court. I have just one man to help me.

Nosco That's a good idea. Two men ought to be enough to run any kingdom. (*He mounts the Throne steps.*) Come up here, and sit with me. (*Rococo mounts the steps briskly, and sits down like a man of business.*) What do you call the man who helps you run things?

Rococo (*leaning back with an air*) The Big Chief.

Nosco Big Chief. Head Chief. I see. That's the same as my Chancellor, I suppose. Is he King while you're away?

Rococo Yes. He knows more about the King business than I do. And then, he likes it better.

Nosco Don't you like to be King? (*He turns to the Court.*) You people can go now. (*He seats himself, and one by one the members of the Court approach The Throne, bow, and retire backward.*)

Rococo (*when they have gone*) All that bowin' takes a heap o' time.

Nosco We do it only when we have company. I'd cut it all out, but the Chancellor won't.

Rococo Why don't you make him? You're King, ain't you?

Nosco A King can't make anybody do anything. Do you do as you please?

Rococo Pretty much.

Nosco I don't. I never have. (*There falls a silence, the Kings looking each other over thoughtfully.*) Don't you like to be King?

Rococo There are a good many things I'd rather be.

Nosco (*rising*) Give me your hand. (*Grinning, Rococo rises and they shake, as men who understand.*) Let's take off our crowns. (*They take them off, and Nosco sheds some of his regalia.*)—Markham, put these things on the table.—Now we can be comfortable. How many people are there in your kingdom?

Rococo I don't know. They are born so fast and die so slow that I don't count 'em. What's the use? They're all there.

Nosco (*snickering*) Are you a Socialist?

Rococo I don't know. What is it? Maybe I am one and don't know it yet.

Nosco It's where you want every man to have as many rights as the next one, and the land belongs to everybody. I'm one, but I don't know much about it yet. I'm studying up. (*He digs around under The Throne, and gets out a lot of books.*) I'll let you have some of my books. It's a wonder you haven't heard of it. You'd make a fine Socialist. What are you doing? Just out for fun?

Rococo (*grinning*) I'm out studying the different kinds of governments. I got so tired of reigning I thought I'd get out and see the world. I tell you a King gets all musty stayin' in one place, and doin' things like his grandfather did.

Nosco (*snickering*) Or like his father-in-law did. That's the Limit. Have you a father-in-law?

Rococo (*snickering*) He's dead. His head was—er cut off just before I came to the throne. (*They snicker like two naughty boys.*)

Nosco (*curling up sociably*) Do you hear much about the way he did things?

Rococo (*winking*) Not on your life! "Every dog has his day!"

Nosco Do the women in your country vote?

Rococo No, but it's because they don't want to. I'd let 'em. We run a Republic with a King Attachment.

Nosco I wish you'd stay a week! Are you going to America?

Rococo You bet. But I'm going in cog., wouldn't you?

Nosco Of course. They think so much of a King over there that it would be worth your life to wear your crown.

Rococo I'm going to See-Au-Go. That's the state where all the pork comes from. I got a great scheme. I figger that See-Au-Go pork can be packed in the Feejee Islands just as well as in See-Au-Go. It's the name that sells it. We've got the pigs, and we've got the nerve, but we haven't got the name. See?

Nosco How are you going to work it?

Rococo (*sinking comfortably lower on his spine*) It's a great scheme. (*He points inquiring at Markham's back.*) Why, man, there's millions in it!

Nosco (*indicating Markham*) Safe as a tombstone. Old friend of mine. Go on.

Rococo I'm going over there, and (*he leans forward*) learn the process.

Nosco (*nodding*) Steal the patent?

Rococo Steal the patent. I figger that what can be done in America can be done in Feejee if you have American brains. It ain't location, man; it's BRAINS. (*Off-stage there is a booming sound. Rococo starts.*) What's that?

Nosco (*rising*) 'Twelve o'clock. That's Lord Firebugg's idea,—to shoot off a cannon instead of blowing the whistle for the factory hands. It wastes a lot of powder, and makes everybody jump, but Firebugg says it keeps up the war spirit. He's clean daft on war. (*The*

booming sounds again.) And every time I turn around somebody blows a trumpet. 'That's the way they did in my father-in-law's time. It makes me feel like an auction sale. (*rises*) Let's go see the horses before lunch. And I've got two dandy Irish setters.

Rococo When I get home I'll send you a dog that is a dog. (*They step down.*)

Nosco I wish you'd stay a week. I haven't had such a good time I don't know when. We'd better put on our crowns. We may run into the Chancellor. He thinks a crown is everything. (*They tog up, snickering, with many flourishes.*) When we get to the stables we can take them off. He doesn't like horses. 'That's a fine crown you got. (*examines it*) Tomorrow we can do as we please. I never reign on Saturdays. Let's go fishin'.

Markham (*warningly*) 'The Lord High Chancellor!

Nosco Tell him I'm not reigning now.

Markham (*excitedly*) But he's right here!

Nosco Heavens!—Let's hide out! Come on! (*He runs up the Throne steps, and ducks behind it, his spurs catching on his cape as he runs. Rococo stumbles after him, snickering and dropping things.*)

(*Re-enter the Chancellor, in haste.*)

Chancellor (*with papers in his hand*) This is most unfortunate. It is imperative that the King sign these papers before my departure. Where is he?

Markham He said he was going to the stables, my lord. I have not seen him since. (*The Chancellor walks out, head up.*)

Nosco (*bobbing up from behind The Throne, his crown over one eye*) "Good eye, Mr. Umpire!"—Come on, let's take a sneak! (*They descend cautiously, Nosco's spur, catching in his cape, almost throwing him.*)

Markham Somebody's coming! Watch out! (*The Kings stand, snickering, listening, ready to flee. Nosco takes off his spurs and puts them in his pocket.*) It's Queen Agria! She's right here!

Nosco (flying up the steps, dragging *Rococo* with him) We're in for it! Sit down, man, sit down! (Snickering they sink on *The Throne*.)

(Enter *Queen Agria*, unattended, in haste and in agitation.)

Agria (stepping grandly to the foot of *The Throne* steps) Pardon me, your Majesty, for intruding myself upon you again —

Nosco (rising, his crown over one eye, but grave as a judge) That's all right. Let me present my friend, King *Rococo*, of the *Feejee Islands*.—Your Majesty, *Queen Agria*, at present a guest of our Court.

Rococo (rising and making two choppy little bows) Madam, I hope you're first rate.

Agria (with a graceful bend) Hearing that a stranger had come to the court I determined to throw myself upon his mercy. (*Rococo* looks scared, but faces the pathetic music.) I am a woman without a home, a Queen without a Kingdom, an outcast without a friend. Perchance you are the one sent to help me; perchance your feet (*Rococo* looks at his feet hastily) have been guided to this alien shore that I may find in you a friend.

Nosco (stepping to the floor, sorry and rattled) Won't you be seated, your Majesty?—*Markham*, place a chair.

Agria (loftily, ignoring *Nosco* and the chair) King *Rococo*, I address myself to you, and to you alone. I, an alien, address myself to you, a stranger.

Rococo (standing awkwardly) What's the matter of you, Madam? I don't get you.

Agria (breaking down) I want my kingdom back! I want my kingdom back! I ask you, I, a lonely and forsaken woman, ask you will you take your soldiers, and go into my country, and kill the man who stole my kingdom? Speak, speak, oh speak! Have you the courage of a man?

Rococo How far is your kingdom? (*Nosco, standing by his side, crown atilt, with his hands in his pockets, looks at her gravely.*)

Agria (*bitterly*) You hesitate. You waste time. You palter with words. You ask questions. Your eyes seek the ground. You weigh your thoughts. You seek excuses. Can it be you are a selfish coward? Perish the thought! I ask you once again. I ask you once for all, will you or will you not help me get my kingdom back?

Rococo (*changing his weight to the other foot*) Who took your kingdom?

Agria (*with a despairful gesture of disdain*) More questions! More evasions! Ah, Kings are not what they were! Time was, when a King, seeing a woman in distress, would leap to her assistance. He would not sheathe his sword until her wrongs were avenged. Your heart is cold, your blood is ice. Pardon my intrusion. I thought you were a KING! (*She sweeps out with splendid hauteur.*)

Rococo (*grinning*) Where is her kingdom? She's a fine looker.

Nosco She's an International Complication. Let's cut out for the stables. (*They go down the steps.*)

Markham (*in a panic at the door*) Wait a minute! I think somebody's coming! (*The Kings pause, listening and snickering.*) It's the Minstrel!!

Nosco (*hopping up the steps, dragging Rococo after him*) He's the worst yet! Duck—duck, I say! (*They dodge behind The Throne.*)

(*Enter the Minstrel, with white gloves on, and music.*)

Minstrel Ah, 'The Throne is left unto me vacant! I had thought to beguile the Kings with a pleasant ballad.

"I feel like one who treads alone
Some banquet hall deserted;
Whose lights are fled, whose garlands dead,
And all but he departed."

Be it so ; be it so. I will sing to 'The Throne, whence my King has departed.

(*After some preliminary poses and thrills and quavers, he sings Tosti's "Dreams."* "I dream of the day I met you ; I dream of the light divine . . ." *As he sings with growing fervor, he turns his back upon The Throne, pouring out his sentimental heart in an abandonment of self-appreciation. Nosco and Rococo keep bobbing up and down, behind The Throne, applauding in pantomime. As the Minstrel rises, on tiptoe, to the full force of the impassioned climax, "I shall love thee, forever, as long as my heart shall beat!" the Kings tiptoe out, Markham holding the curtains for them.*)

(*Curtain*)

ACT III

THE THRONE ROOM, TWO WEEKS LATER

(*The Throne Room. The Throne in order, and the room cleared, save for a handsome carved chair, and two tall floor vases of roses. Markham, sad-faced, stands looking at The Throne, as if the end of all things were come.*)

(*Enter Lord Nabob*)

Nabob They're coming in a minute. Is everything ready?

Markham Yes.

Nabob (*changing the position of a vase*) The Throne's all slicked up, isn't it? The Queen looks stunning. But she hates to give it up . . . What's the matter with you?

Markham There is nothing the matter with me. (*He takes his position by the door.*) What should be the matter with me?

Nabob (*preening himself*) You look as if you'd spent your last cent the day before yesterday. We're safe enough. Everything will go on just the same.

Markham I know that.

Nabob If anybody loses out it will be old Firebugg. The people hate him for raising the taxes. But you needn't be scared. Your father served the old King, didn't he?

Markham He did.

Nabob Then Nosco will see that you're taken care of. Anybody that knew his father can have all he's got.

Markham I know that.

Nabob (*shrugging*) Then what's the use of getting a grouch? One King's as good as another. What do you care? It all comes in a lifetime. (*Off-stage, a trumpet sounds three times.*) The Court is coming. Take it easy, my boy. Take it easy. (*He goes, laughing.*)

Markham (*gazing sadly at The Throne*) "It all comes in a lifetime." (*Spying a small book on the last step, he picks it up, turns several leaves slowly, and puts it in his pocket.*) The King is right to go away and leave us. They do not know him here. They have never known him. (*Off-stage, the trumpet sounds a long, clear single note.*) "One King's as good as another." . . . "One King's as good as another."

(*Enter a Courtier*)

Courtier (gravely) The Court is coming.

(*Enter, with a flourish, King Nosco and Queen Matilda, in full regalia, her train being carried by a Page; the Nurse, with the Heir Apparent, attended by a Page; the Duke of Naught, in royal togs, the Chancellor, the Executioner, the Minister, the Minstrel, all in court dress, and Queen Agria, attended by her Lady, and Lords Nabob and Elite. As they enter, slowly, they range themselves in two wings, extending on either side of The Throne. The King and Queen stand in front of The Throne, with their backs to it.*)

Nosco (when all movement has ceased, giving his hand to the Queen) Come, your Majesty. (They go up the steps, and seat themselves on The Throne, the Page adjusting the Queen's train, then standing aside. *Nosco* looks toward the Chancellor, and nods.) Now, Chancellor.

Chancellor (bowing to the King, then to the Court) It is the King's pleasure to address the Court on a matter of grave importance to the State. (The Nurse wipes her eyes; the Pages are sniffing.)

Nosco (rising) As most of you know, I have been tired of being King for a long while now. And as I don't think that a man can be a good King when he would rather be something else, I am going to give my crown to my brother, the Duke of Naught. He says he would like to be a King, and if he feels that way about it, most likely he will make a fair sort of King. The Heir Apparent can not be King for at least twenty years, and I don't propose to farm out this kingdom to a lot of lords who will fight among themselves, and maybe kill my boy before he grows up. I don't mean anything personal by this, but you know the thing has been done, and I'm not going to take any risks. When he grows up he can be King if he wants to; it'll be up to him. I know some of you think I have no right to give away my crown, but I do not agree with you. I have come to the conclusion that a King has as much right to strike as a working-man. Every man has a right to revolt if he wants to, and I have revolted. (*Markham, motionless at the curtain, is sorrow-pierced by every word.*) The day is coming when a King will have the same rights as other men. Of course I could have stirred up trouble, and made this government over, but I don't believe in changing things with a gun. When I have to shoot a man to convince him, I'll obliterate myself first. It's your country, and you can run it as you please. Before I take off my crown I want to thank you for helping me run this kingdom. And the Queen wants to thank you, too. We know that you will help the new King in the same way, and be

just as happy as you were before. 'Thank you, everybody. And good luck to you all. (*to the Queen*) Please rise, your Majesty. (*The Weeping Queen rises. He takes off her crown, and takes her scepter, laying them gently on The Throne seat. The women weep silently. The Minstrel is all but dissolved.*) Chancellor! (*The Chancellor steps forward, and assists the ex-Queen down, and to the chair, where she seats herself. Nosco watches the weeping women with distress.*) You must not feel bad about this. Please do not cry. You ought to be glad that I will be happier where I am going. Every man has a right to be happy in his own way; that's in the United States Declaration of Principles. (*Markham wipes his eyes.*) Chancellor, escort the Duke of Naught to The Throne, if you please. (*The Chancellor escorts the Duke. Nosco motions him to kneel.*) I, Nosco III, King of Nolande, vested with sovereign power, crown you, Richard, Duke of Naught, in the presence of the Court. (*He takes off his crown and puts it on the kneeling Duke's head, then hands him the scepter.*) May you have a long and prosperous reign, and the love of all your people. Rise, King of Nolande! (*The new King rises to his feet. The women sob outright.*) Long live the King!

Court (*in various stages of semi-collapse*) Long live the King! Long live the King. (*Nosco steps briskly down.*)

Duke (*standing in front of The Throne, lonesome enough*) Nosco, come back! (*Nosco turns, irresolute.*) Come sit on The Throne with me!

Nosco I can't. I'm not King any more.

Duke As long as you are in this country, you are King. (*The Court applauds.*) You see how we all feel about it.—Chancellor, bring him back! (*The Chancellor offers his arm to Nosco, and escorts him to The Throne.*)

Nosco (*seating himself by the King*) I haven't anything else to say.

Queen (*sobbing*) Tell them where we're going.

Nosco Everybody knows where we're going.

Queen But they have not been told o—o—officially.

Kosco (*smiling*) I see.—We're going to America, and live on Wall Street. That's where all the millionaires live, and all the big banks are, with the Goddess of Liberty in front, blind-folded. I guess I'll be a broker; that's the biggest business over there. I'm going to make my own money, and spend it as I please.

Nurse (*weeping*) Pardon me, your Majesty,—I mean, my Lord, but will you take the Heir Apparent with you right away?

Nosco Of course. He isn't the Heir Apparent any more. People shall never throw it up to him, "Your Father was a King!" But they won't over there. In America nobody cares what you are so you got money and mind your own business. But you mustn't cry. You can go with him if you want to.—That reminds me. If any of you want to go over, now's your chance. It won't cost you a cent. (*There is silence. He looks toward the Executioner.*) My lord, Jeremy Jackson's going.

Executioner (*bowing sadly*) So I understand. I hope he will make a desirable citizen.

Nosco (*grinning*) But you very much doubt it. How about yourself?

Executioner Your Majesty, I feel it my duty to stay in my own country.

Nosco Then you'd better stay.—Chancellor, how does the proposition strike you?

Chancellor (*bowing*) Your Majesty is very kind, but I feel that I must decline the invitation.

Nosco Well, well, can't I stir up any pioneer blood?—How about you, Lord Firebugg? They've got plenty of warships over there, and a standing army that never sits down.

Minister (*sadly*) Your Majesty,—pardon me, my Lord, you will forgive me. Much as I am attached to your Majesty's person, I feel that it is my duty to remain at home. My work is here, my Lord.

Nosco No doubt you are right. (*He looks toward the Minstrel.*) And you?

Minstrel A poet's place is at his own fireside, your Majesty. He must sing the songs of his native land. But this parting tears my heart in twain. (*He dissolves again.*)

Nosco Then Jeremy Jackson and I will have to fight it out together. (*Markham, at the door, is steadfastly regarding Nosco.*) But you're all right on the matter; if you're happy here, this is the place for you. My brother will need all of you. (*He turns to the Duke.*) Send the Court away. The business is done.

Duke (*rising*) The Court is dismissed. (*Nosco steps briskly to the floor, taking his place behind the Queen's chair. One by one, the Courtiers, after bowing profoundly to Nosco and the Queen, approach The Throne, bow, and leave the room, with the usual several steps backward from The Throne.*)

Nosco (*as Agria approaches*) You stay. I want to talk with you. (*The last Courtier having gone, the new King sits down, sighing happily.*) Queen Agria, we want you to go to America with us. Come on. The trip will do you good. You can come back when you want to.

Agria Your Majesty is very kind, but I can not think of pleasure now. I must get my kingdom back.

Nosco Oh, give that up. Come on, and be a good fellow! Come to America and be a Suffragette if you want to see big fighting.

Queen (*looking out from her handkerchief*) You could marry a millionaire, and he would buy your kingdom back.

Nosco Don't you think he would. There's not money enough in the King's business for an American,—not in 1912.

Agria (*to the Queen*) Your Majesty forgets that it was an American who stole my kingdom.

Duke (*rising formally*) I shall be very glad to have Queen Agria stay here at the Court, as my guest.

Agria (*with a tragic bow*) Your Majesty, I will stay until I get my kingdom back. And may Heaven reward

your kindness to an outcast! (*She turns coldly to Nosco.*) Your poor wife is broken-hearted.

Queen (*sobbing*) I do not want to go to America. I would rather be a Queen.

Nosco (*patting her on the shoulder*) You won't mind it when you get used to being a woman.

Queen (*rising*) I am glad my poor Father did not live to see this day. (*The Page takes up her train.*)

Agria (*putting her arm around the Queen*) Come, my dear. Man do not understand.

Queen (*looking coldly at Nosco*) My father was a King. He did not read Socialism books.

Agria (*weeping*) My husband never saw a Socialism book, but now Kings are different. Come, my dear. (*They go, weeping, attended by the sniffing Pages and Agria's Lady, much oppressed.*)

Nosco (*having studied Markham's back in silence a long moment*) Markham!

Markham (*starting*) Your Majesty—I mean, my Lord!

Nosco What are you going to do?

Markham I do not know, your Majesty—I mean, my Lord.

Duke Markham will stay with me.—Won't you, Markham?

Markham (*steadily*) Yes, your Majesty.

Duke I'll give you a better place, Markham. You can have anything you ask for.

Markham Yes, your Majesty.

Nosco Markham, come here.

Markham Yes, my Lord.

Nosco (*unfastening his royal robe*) Take this robe. (*hands it to Markham*) Take this star. (*He unfastens a decoration.*) And this ribbon. (*Takes a band that crosses his breast, and hands it to Markham.*) Give them to the King.—Put them on, your Majesty. (*Markham assists the Duke to put the things on, then steps to the floor, the picture of sadness.*)

Nosco (*gently, leaning on the chair's back*) Markham, how many years have you served me?

Markham (*standing by The Throne steps*) Eighteen years, your Majesty—I mean, my Lord.

Nosco You mean you've stood at that door eighteen years, patient as a monument. But really you've served me ever since I was a little shaver in kilts, haven't you?

Markham Yes, your Majesty.

Nosco And we waded in the fishpond, and you caught crawfish for me.

Markham (*steadily*) Yes, your Majesty.

Nosco (*relentlessly*) Your father served my father all his life, didn't he?

Markham Your Majesty has a good memory.

Nosco Yes, I have a good memory . . . I remember the day you dived to the bottom of the lake for me . . . Markham, will you go to America with me?

Markham (*falteringly*) Your Majesty! Your Majesty!

Nosco It's a new country, and they say every man has a chance there. "America, the Golden Land," that's what our peasants call it (*He lifts his head proudly, and holds out his hand.*) Will you go? (*Markham springs joyously toward him, and, seizing his hand, makes as if to lift it to his lips.*) No, no, no more of that. As man to man, Markham! (*They shake hands earnestly.*) Let's go to the fishpond. I haven't seen a crawfish in a hundred years! (*He inhales a long, full breath, then nods blithely to the King.*) See you later, your Majesty! (*They go out, Nosco's arm around Markham's shoulder.*)

Duke (*taking off his crown to look at it*) A crown. (*He turns it around and around, feasting his eyes on it.*) And it's mine! (*He puts it on carefully, then examines the Star.*) I am a King! I am a King!

(*Curtain*)

EPILOGUE

THE PRIVATE OFFICE OF MR. FERDINAND NOSCO,
FIVE YEARS LATER

(The Private Office of Ferdinand Nosco. A well-appointed business office. Mr. Nosco is seated at a big desk, writing.)

(Enter a Messenger Boy)

Boy *(mauling off his cap)* Telegram, Sir.

Nosco *(taking the message)* I'm glad to see you take off your cap. You fellows ought to be as polite as any other business men.

Boy Yes sir.

Nosco There's no answer. Here you are. *(gives a coin.)*

Boy Thank yer, Sir. *(He cuts out. Nosco resumes his writing. The Office Boy comes in, lays a bundle of papers on the desk, and goes out. The phone rings.)*

Nosco *(taking the receiver)* Well? . . . Yes . . . Yes . . . Why, hello, hello! I'd rather see you than any man on earth! . . . Oh, I see. . . . I see. . . . Sure thing. . . . Yes, fine. . . . Beats being a King all to smash. . . . Can you come right up? . . . Yes, right away. . . . Don't make any engagements till you see me. . . . All right. *(hangs up the receiver)* Well, of all men on earth! *(He rings the bell violently.)* Of all men on earth!

(Enter the Office Boy, like a shot.)

Is Markham in the office?

Boy Yes sir. He has jes' come in, Sir.

Nosco Tell him to come here. *(The Boy shoots out. Nosco springs up, walking about, smiling and wagging his head.)*

(Enter Markham, in a nobby business suit.)

Old boy, guess who's in New York!

Markham Your brother?

Nosco The King? Not on your life! He's head over heels in the war. Guess again.

Markham (grinning) The Lord High Executioner?

Nosco You're way off! King Rococo!

Markham King ——?

Nosco King Rococo. Don't you remember him? Rococo, of the Feejee Islands? Hair like this? (*indicates bushy hair*)

Markham Of course, of course. We called him King Skyrocket.

Nosco (*pacing about in high fettle*) They don't make 'em any finer than King Rococo. Do you remember how he carried a gun? If I hadn't met him I'd be still fighting it out with old Firebugg. He's been in Arizona, it seems, for two years. He's coming right up. He'll be here in a few minutes. You answer the mail this morning. (*grins*) I'm not reigning today.

Markham (*with an old-World bow*) Yes, your Majesty.

Nosco King Rococo! Honest as the day is long, and blunt as a fence post!—Markham, have you ever been sorry you came to America with me?

Markham Not for one minute, your Majesty.

Nosco Do you remember how you used to announce "The Lord High Executioner"?

Markham Yes, your Majesty. And you would always find something else to do, instanter!

Nosco He was a murderous old codger! Well, hurry up with the mail. Of course you'll go with us.

Markham Your Majesty is very kind. (*He goes out, bowing low at the door.*)

Nosco (*walking about, hands in his pockets*) King Rococo! I can see him now carrying that gun! He was a first-class Socialist all the time, and didn't know it! And now he's in New York!

(*Enter Mrs. Nosco, "swell" and faultless, carrying a big yellow "Votes for Women" banner.*)

Mrs. Nosco Are you ready?

Nosco Sorry to disappoint you, my dear, but I can't go.

Mrs. Nosco (*seating herself*) But you promised!

Nosco (*looking at his watch*) What time is the parade?

Mrs. Nosco At half-past ten. You said you'd come sure.

Nosco Can't do it, my dear. A little matter has just come up —

Mrs. Nosco Yes, I know. Don't repeat the formula. I know perfectly well what comes next. Oh, I had a letter from Agria this morning. The Lord High Executioner is dead.

Nosco You don't tell me. Did he die a natural death?

Mrs. Nosco (*taking a large square envelope from her bag*) He died of rheumatism, Agria says. And she says he had an enormous funeral and such beautiful flowers.

Nosco Well, he deserved them. He was rather strong on funerals himself.

Mrs. Nosco (*scanning the letter*) I should think you would be ashamed of yourself. I remember him as a very fine man. Well, he's gone to his reward, poor fellow. (*Nosco snickers.*) You never did appreciate those men.

Nosco I do from this distance. They're a hefty Bunch. Do you remember King Rococo? He's in New York. (*She rises.*)

Mrs. Nosco (*folding the letter*) Rococo? . . . King Rococo? Oh, that funny man with the bad manners! Well, what about him?

Nosco (*grimly*) He's been studying etiquette in the University of Chicago.

Mrs. Nosco (*tossing her head*) I'm glad to hear it.

Nosco He'll be here a week, and of course he'll stay at our house.

Mrs. Nosco You're not going to ask that ridiculous man to visit us? He was all right at home, where we were used to Kings of all sorts, but in New York —!

Nosco But I told you he's been studying etiquette in the University of Chicago! Won't you stay and see him?

Mrs. Nosco No, thank you!

Nosco Well, send the car right back. I'll take him to see the parade. He believed in woman suffrage long before you did! (*She goes out with an exasperated look.*) That's all *she* knows about *him*! . . . If women ever got below the surface of things they'd drown.

(*Enter the Office Boy.*)

Boy A gentleman to see you.

Nosco (*tapping him on the shoulder*) Bring him in, bring him in, Boy! He's an old friend of mine!

Boy (*grinning*) Yes sir. (*He cuts out. Nosco stands, smiling, expectant.*)

(*Enter Rococo, looking like an American gentleman of foreign parentage.*)

Nosco (*starting forward with extended hand*) Hello, your Majesty!

Rococo (*grinning*) Hello, your Majesty! (*They shake hands long and hard.*)

Nosco Have you cut the King business?

Rococo (*still shaking hands*) Have you?

Nosco I revolted.

Rococo I resigned.

Nosco It's great to see you! Sit down, sit down! (*He drags a chair to his desk.*) I'd rather see you than any man I know.

Rococo (*seating himself*) I hear you're a Napoleon of Finance.

Nosco (*seating himself, and leaning back, chesty and careless*) Oh yes, I've corralled a few millions. It isn't hard—if you know the corners.

Rococo (*winking*) And the margins! (*They snicker and snicker.*)

Nosco I thought you were going to pack Chicago beef in Feejee?

Rococo (*winking*) It cost too much to ship the labels!

Nosco (*rising*) Shake hands again, your Majesty. (*They shake gleefully, and seat themselves closer together.*) Do you remember the Lord High Executioner? He's dead.

Rococo (*pulling a serious face*) Well, well, what a loss to the country! . . . Well, we've all got to die. Who will carry his little hatchet now?

Nosco I haven't heard. Old Firebugg's got 'em tangled up in The Big Fight. The Kaiser eats 'em alive!

Rococo What became of that Queen who was hanging out at your place,—The International Complication? Queen A—A—

Nosco (*snickering*) Agria the Outcast? Well sir, she married the King,—my brother, you know. She couldn't get the King business out of her system. Now my wife can. She's a Suffragette.

Rococo That's the last thing I thought she'd be.

Nosco Just so, your Majesty. But she makes speeches and leads parades and all that. There's a parade on this morning. And the Heir Apparent,—you ought to see His Nibs! Strong as the son of a Texas farmer. But you'll see him. You'll stay with us, you know. What did you say you're doing?

Rococo (*getting chesty in turn*) I'm a Promoter.

Nosco (*grinning*) Of course. What do you promote—besides your salary?

Rococo Mines. I'm President of the Amalgamated Copper Mines of Australia. Paid up capital, four millions. I'll sell you an option of the finest copper mine in that country, if you say the word.

Nosco (*thoughtfully*) That might be a good thing. I've been looking into copper lately . . . What do you think of the King business now?

Rococo It's the bummiest business a man can run. There's no money in it, and no glory any more. Of course there was a time when a King cut some ice, but now he's a parade uniform with a phonograph attachment.

Nosco That's what he is. I'm going to bring my boy up in this country. That's the most any man can do for a country. By the time he's a man there won't be a King in Europe. This War is a house-cleaner. Last week I bought the only live Socialist newspaper in America. We'll elect the next President, or I'll ditch the train. (*He looks at his watch, and rings the bell.*) We'll see the parade, then go to lunch.

(*Re-enter the Office Boy.*)

Tell the Secretary to come here. (*The Boy goes.*) Tonight we'll talk copper.

Rococo It's a good proposition.

(*Re-enter Markham.*)

Nosco (*to Rococo*) Here's an old friend of yours.

Rococo It's Markham! (*He rises, extending his hand.*) Man alive, you haven't turned a hair!

Nosco Markham's turned out all right. He's a Social Democrat, whatever that is. He and the Heir Apparent run the business. I figger on margins. (*to Markham*) See if the car is there. You'll go with us. And shut up everything.

Markham You're not reigning this afternoon, then?

Nosco Nobody is. Dismiss the boys. We're entertaining a King. (*Markham goes.*)

Rococo You're well fixed here.

Nosco (*taking up his hat and gloves*) I tell you, man, that (*points to his desk*) is 'The 'Throne today, and the telephone is 'The Lord High Chancellor.

Rococo (*taking up his hat, cane and gloves*) And what's 'The Lord High Executioner?

Nosco Public Opinion.

(*Re-enter Markham, hat and gloves in hand.*)

Markham Your Majesty, the car is here.

Nosco (*holding the door wide open*) Your Majesty, do me the honor. (*They go.*)

(*Curtain*)

Bess Goes to Europe (1910) A Comedy of Haste in three acts and a telephone prologue. You take a girl like Bess Tapping, a pellmell, never-quite-on-time girl, and get her ready to go suddenly to Europe—it's some job, believe me! 5 male, 6 female characters. Time, 1½ hours. Price 25 cents.

The Rescue of Prince Hal (1911) A Comedy of Manners in three acts and an epilogue. His Aunt Kate, interested in "things that count after you're dead," promptly rescues Harry Henderson Hess from the inconsequent life of his ultra-fashionable relations. 4 male, 5 female characters. Time, 2 hours. Price 25 cents.

Preserving a Smith (1912) A Burlesque of Shadows in three acts. The Noahs, eight of 'em, lonesome, isolate, bereft, snoopin' aroun' in the darkness,—the pervading, perpetual darkness!—discover a Stowaway in the Ark,—little Johnnie Smith, alias "Shiner." 5 male, 4 female characters. Time 2 hours. Price 25 cents.

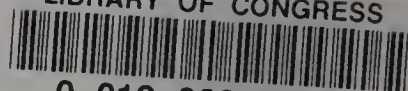
The Clever Doctor (1912) A Dramatic Satire in five acts. Raised to a fashionable practice in a faultless neighborhood, by a comic twist of fortune, is Jacob Crabbs, Peasant, Pretender and Potential Toady. 5 male, 3 female characters. Time, 1½ hours. Price 25 cents.

Prof. Wright Falls in Love (1923) A Spring Rhapsody in three acts. A young Professor, modest, deferential, and awfully polite, in love for the first time, and in the sentimental month of May,—that's this. 5 male, 8 female characters. Time, 2 hours. Price 25 cents.

The King of Nolande (1923) A Political Satire in three acts and an epilogue. Ferdinand Nosco, born a King, has too much brains for the job, resigns, and lights out to earn an honest living. 8 male, 2 female characters. Time, 2 hours. Price 25 cents.

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